

Message Text

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R 220229Z JAN 76

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY LONDON

INFO AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

AMCONSUL BELFAST

CINCEUR

CINCUSNAVEUR

NAVCOMSTA LONDONDERRY

CINCLANT

OASD/ISA

OASD/PA

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 015549

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, UK

SUBJECT: REALIGNMENT OF NAVAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM

REF: (A) STATE 7972 (DTG 131933Z JAN 76)(NOTAL)

(B) CONNAVSTA LONDONDERRY (DTG 181749Z JAN 76) (NOTAL)

(C) LONDON 00890 (DTG 191809Z JAN 76) (NOTAL)

1. FOLLOWING IS WASH. CLEARED PRESS GUIDANCE, AS PROMISED

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REFTEL A. IN VIEW OF LEAK REPORTED REFTEL B WE WOULD

APPRECIATE EARLY HMG RESPONSE SO THAT APPROVED GUIDANCE CAN BE USED, AS NECESSARY BY LONDONDERRY, EDINBURGH AND BELFAST.

2. CONTAINED HEREIN IS PUBLIC AFFAIRS GUIDANCE CONCERNING THE DISESTABLISHMENT OF NAVCOMMSTA LONDONDERRY AND SUBS-QUENT RELOCATION OF SELECTED EQUIPMENT AND PERSONNEL TO NAVRADSTA THURSO. CONTENTS OF THIS MESSAGE HAVE BEEN MODIFIED TO CONFORM WITH LONDON 221751Z DEC 75. RECOMMEND LOW KEY PUBLIC AFFAIRS POLICY AND THAT FOLLOWING PROPOSED RELEASE AND QUESTIONS/ANSWERS BE USED IN RESPONSE TO QUERY ONLY. QUOTE: THE UNITED STATES NAVY, AFTER CONSULTATION WITH HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT, WILL RELOCATE ITS COMMUNICATIONS FUNCTIONS FROM LONDONDERRY, NORTHERN IRELAND TO THURSO, SCOTLAND. THE LATTER WILL BE UPGRADED

TO A NAVAL COMMUNICATIONS STATION. INSTALLATION OF ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT IN EXISTING BUILDINGS AT THURSO WILL BEGIN WITHIN THE NEXT FEW MONTHS. IT IS EXPECTED THAT THIS INSTALLATION OF EQUIPMENT WILL BE COMPLETED BY JULY 1977 AND THAT THE COMMUNICATIONS STATION IN LONDONDERRY WILL BE CLOSED BY DECEMBER 1977. THIS CONSOLIDATION, WHICH IS PART OF A WORLDWIDE REALIGNMENT OF THE U.S. NAVAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM, WILL RESULT IN AN ANNUAL SAVINGS OF APPROXIMATELY 2.8 MILLION DOLLARS TO THE U.S. GOVERNMENT. EXCEPT FOR NEW ANTENNA CONFIGURATIONS AND THE ADDITION OF A SATELLITE COMMUNICATIONS TERMINAL, NEW CONSTRUCTION AT THURSO WILL BE MINIMAL. THE ACQUISITION OF ADDITIONAL PROPERTY IN SCOTLAND WILL NOT BE NECESSARY AND THE MOVE WILL NOT DISTURB THE ENVIRONMENT OR LIMIT THE PROSPECTS FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE THURSO AREA. UNQUOTE.

Q.1. WHEN DID THE U.S. GOVERNMENT FIRST BEGIN OPERATING A NAVAL COMMUNICATIONS STATION IN LONDONDERRY?

A.1. IN FEBRUARY 1942.

Q.2. WHAT IS THE REASON FOR THIS RELOCATION?

A.2. MODERN TECHNOLOGY WILL PERMIT CONSOLIDATION AND UPGRADE OF COMMUNICATIONS WITH NO LOSS OF FLEET SUPPORT
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AND WILL SAVE THE U.S. GOVERNMENT 2.8 MILLION DOLLARS ANNUALLY IN PERSONNEL AND OPERATING COSTS.

Q.3. HAVE THERE BEEN ANY RECENT SECURITY THREATS TO NAVCOMMSTA LONDONDERRY?

A.3. NO, HOWEVER ALMOST TWO YEARS AGO, ON 10 APRIL 1974, AN UNMANNED MICROWAVE TOWER AT SLIEVEANORRA WAS DESTROYED BY AN EXPLOSION. IT WAS NOT REBUILT AND IT IS NOT KNOWN

WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE. ALTERNATIVE ROUTES OF COMMUNICATIONS WERE ESTABLISHED. THERE WERE NO PERSONNEL INJURIES.

Q.4. DID THE UNSURE SECURITY SITUATION OF NORTHERN IRELAND INFLUENCE THE DECISION TO DISESTABLISH THE LONDONDERRY STATION?

A.4. NO. THE RELOCATION IS PART OF A WORLDWIDE REALIGNMENT OF THE NAVY'S TELECOMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM THAT WILL TAKE ADVANTAGE OF MODERN TECHNOLOGY AND WILL RESULT IN SIGNIFICANT SAVINGS.

Q.5. WHAT WILL BE THE ECONOMIC IMPACT ON THE LONDONDERRY COMMUNITY?

A.5. SINCE MORE THAN HALF OF THE U.S. PERSONNEL STATIONED THERE LIVE ON THE BASE, THE ECONOMIC FACTOR IS RELATIVELY SMALL. HOWEVER, 102 LOCAL CIVILIAN JOBS AT THE NAVCOMMSTA WILL BE PHASED OUT OVER A PERIOD OF TIME.

Q.6. WILL IT BE POSSIBLE FOR THE CIVILIAN EMPLOYEES IN IRELAND TO RELOCATE IN THURSO IF THEY DESIRE?

A.6. U.S. NAVY POLICY HAS ALWAYS BEEN TO GIVE THE PERSONNEL BEING RELEASED THE FIRST CHANCE AT NEW POSITIONS. FEW IF ANY ARE EXPECTED TO TRANSFER, HOWEVER, SINCE ONLY EIGHT ADDITIONAL CIVILIAN BILLETS WILL BE ADDED TO THURSO'S PERSONNEL ALLOWANCE

Q.7. WILL THERE BE ANY MONETARY COMPENSATION FOR THESE PEOPLE?

A.7. THEY WILL BE GIVEN SEVERANCE PAY.

Q.8. WHAT IS THE AMOUNT OF THE U.S. PAYROLL FOR U.K. CIVILIANS AT NAVCOMMSTA LONDONDERRY?

A.8. APPROXIMATELY DOLLARS 850K ANNUALLY.
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Q.9. WILL ANY EQUIPMENT OR PERSONNEL BE LEFT AT LONDONDERRY?

A.9. NO.

Q.10. WHAT WILL BECOME OF ALL THE EQUIPMENT NOW LOCATED AT THE LONDONDERRY SITE?

A.10. IT WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE FOR USE BY OTHER STATIONS IN THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS NETWORK; SOME OF IT MAY BE MOVED TO THURSO.

Q.11. HOW LONG HAS THIS CHANGE BEEN IN THE PLANNING STAGES?

A.11. THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS APPROVED THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A MAIN COMMUNICATIONS STATION FOR THE UNITED KINGDOM IN MARCH 1975 SUBJECT TO DIPLOMATIC APPROVAL FROM

THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT. DIPLOMATIC APPROVAL HAS BEEN GIVEN.

Q.12. WHAT WILL BE THE IMPACT AT THURSO OF THE NEW CONSTRUCTION?

A.12. IT IS NOT EXPECTED THAT THE CHANGES AT THURSO WILL APPRECIABLY AFFECT THE ENVIRONMENT. SOME ANTENNA CHANGES, A NEW, SMALL BUILDING TO HOUSE THE SATELLITE COMMUNICATIONS TERMINAL - BOTHON PROPERTY ALREADY USED BY THE U.S. GOVERNMENT - WILL BE THE ONLY ADDITIONS.

Q.13. HOW WILL THE UPGRADING OF NAVAL RADIO STATION THURSO TO A NAVAL COMMUNICATIONS STATION AFFECT US MILITARY PERSONNEL STRENGTH?

A.13. APPROXIMATELY 87 ADDITIONAL UNIFORMED PERSONNEL WILL BE ASSIGNED TO THURSO.

Q.14. WILL THESE ADDITIONAL PERSONNEL REQUIRE THE CONSTRUCTION OF NEW QUARTERS?

A.14. EARLY PLANNING INDICATIONS ARE THAT THE ANTICIPATED NUMBER OF FAMILIES COULD PROBABLY BE HOUSED IN THE LOCAL CIVILIAN COMMUNITY. HOWEVER, A FORMAL HOUSING SURVEY WILL BE CONDUCTED TO DETERMINE EXACT REQUIREMENTS.

3. IN RESPONSE TO REQUEST REFTEL C, FOR TEXT OF PROPOSED CONFIDENTIAL

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STATEMENT ON LONDONDERRY/THURSO REALIGNMENT IN THE DEFENSE POSTURE STATEMENT, WE HAVE BEEN INFORMED THAT THE SUBJECT WILL NOT REPEAT NOT BE INCLUDED IN THAT DOCUMENT.

4. PRESS GUIDANCE CONTAINED PARA 2 ABOVE DOWNGRADED TO UNCLASSIFIED AFTER RECEIPT OF FORMAL UK APPROVAL ON PLANNED REALIGNMENT ACTION.
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